

SECRET

Adm - 13.10

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6 AUG 1971

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for Science and Technology

SUBJECT : Draft of Historical Article on CORONA

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1. Attached are four copies of an historical article on the CORONA program. Last year the Director asked that articles be written on OXCART and CORONA for possible publication in Studies in Intelligence. The OXCART article appeared in the most recent issue. Abbot Smith, who was then chairman of the Editorial Board of Studies, was having trouble finding someone to write the CORONA article. [ ] offered to make me available, and Abbot accepted.

2. My understanding with Abbot was that I would write a draft and have the text reviewed by persons knowledgeable of the program to the extent necessary to satisfy myself that it was as factually accurate as I could make it. As to the tone of the paper, Abbot said that he did not want a documentary history. He hoped for a lively, interesting story that could be understood by a person who knew nothing about satellite photo reconnaissance. Abbot agreed to take over the finished draft, secure the concurrences that would be required for its publication, and then see it through the publication cycle. Unfortunately, Abbot retired before the final draft was finished, and I am left with a paper that lacks a sponsor. Since this is one of your programs, I believe that your office should be the one to see to the final disposition of the article.

3. The following remarks explain the development of the article and the guidelines I followed:

a. Above all else, I have tried to keep the text as simple, informal, and nontechnical as possible. Abbot read my initial draft. He thought it generally acceptable but felt there was need for fuller explanations of some of the technical terms. I have tried to do this in my final draft.

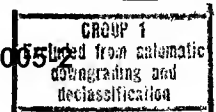
25X1  
b. [ ] before his departure from OSP, lent me all of the documents he could find in OSP files that he thought would be useful in compiling the story. I also reviewed all CORONA files deposited in Records Center by OSA and OSP. I made burn copy "workingpapers" of the documents

NRO review(s) completed.

Copy No. 1 of 3

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that contributed to the story. I still have these working papers but will destroy them when I am sure there will be no need for reference to them.

c. [ ] was most helpful in finding answers to my early questions. After he left, I worked with [ ] and [ ]

d. CORONA files held within the Agency are rather skimpy, especially as regards the early years of the program. More complete data would be available from the contractors, but we thought it inappropriate to reveal to contractors that such an effort was under way. [ ] did check with a contractor on two or three specific points without revealing the reason for their interest.

e. I had a lengthy interview with Richard Bissell before I began writing. He provided "flavor" that would not otherwise have been available, but he was surprisingly vague on specifics.

f. In anticipation of possible publication at the SECRET level, I tried to avoid including any statements of fact that would give an unintended reader a reasonably close fix on performance. I speak of pounds of film but not of feet nor of format. I also speak of longer focal lengths, larger aperture lenses, slower film emulsions, and improved ground resolutions; but I do not cite precise figures for any of them. (The single exception is the reference on page 9 to the six-inch focal length of the Fairchild camera, which was abandoned before the system went into production.)

g. One of the high points in the history of CORONA was the CIA-Air Force struggle for control of the program in the mid-sixties. I do not think this proper for inclusion in an article in Studies. There is a reference on page 13 to "severe frictions," but none of the specifics are given.

h. The contractual arrangements that are touched upon on pages 15 and 16 were subsequently changed quite drastically. I think the changes irrelevant to the story we are trying to tell.

i. There is nothing in the article on targeting, read-out, or reporting and very little on command and control. The omissions are deliberate, arising from considerations of security.

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j. The bulk of the text deals with the difficult formative years and glosses over the later years of high performance. The emphasis is intentional and again is based on security concerns.

k. Portions of the text were reviewed by [redacted] and his group in NPIC. The complete text has been reviewed by [redacted] and John McMahon. Their written comments are attached for your information. John Parangosky has also read the text, but I have not received comments from him. [redacted] also penciled in some suggested changes on the draft copy he read. I have incorporated most of his changes in the present version of the draft. I chose to ignore at least one of them. The payload portion of the space vehicle is referred to on pages 9 through 12 as the "pod." [redacted] suggested that it be called the spacecraft. I have retained pod, because that is what it was actually called in the very early days.

1. The present draft was produced in eight copies. I am sending four to you, retaining three, and presumably will eventually recover the copy that Parangosky still has. I might note that the typing on this draft is my own, and I am faster than I am accurate.

m. You will note that the article closes with the CORONA Program about to come to an end. It may, in fact, be finished by the time the article is published. Minor revision of the text would be required in that event.

4. These are the steps that I see as remaining before the article is submitted for publication. It requires your endorsement, of course, and it should be reviewed by the Director of Security. The Director must then make the decision on whether it may or may not be removed from the [redacted] compartment. If his decision is affirmative, it would then be ready for review by the Studies Editorial Board.

5. I have given the document a SECRET classification in expectation that the text will eventually be classified at that level. For now, however, CORONA is still within the [redacted] control system, and the document should be handled accordingly.

6. If any additional writing is required, I will be happy to do it, and will be pleased to help in any other way I can.